


# North Carolina



## Establishing Self-Management Diabetes Education Programs to Reach Special Populations

### Public Health Problem

Diabetes places a tremendous health burden on the citizens of North Carolina. An estimated 584,000 people have diabetes in North Carolina, and one third of these people probably do not know they have the disease. From 1995 to 2000, the prevalence of diagnosed diabetes in the adult population increased by 42% (from 4.5% to 6.4%); this percentage translates to about 389,000 people with diagnosed diabetes in North Carolina.

### Evidence That Prevention Works

Research, such as the National Institutes of Health's Diabetes Control and Complications Trial, confirms that people with diabetes can drastically reduce their risk for serious complications by controlling their blood glucose levels and following recommended screening guidelines so complications can be detected early. Up to 90% of diabetes-related blindness and over 50% of diabetes-related lower-extremity amputations and kidney failures are preventable.

### Program Example

A CDC-sponsored program, Project DIRECT (Diabetes Interventions Reaching and Educating Communities Together), focuses on the African American community in Southeast Raleigh. Project DIRECT offers a comprehensive approach to prevention and works to reduce the risk factors for diabetes (by promoting increased physical activity and improved dietary practices) and to increase overall awareness of diabetes and its risk factors and complications. Project DIRECT also works to increase the number of people at high risk who are screened for diabetes and to increase the number of people with diagnosed diabetes who receive regular diabetes care. In its first year, Project DIRECT increased the number of diabetes patients who received foot care counseling and foot exams from approximately 20% to 50%. Patient chart audits also have shown increased numbers of people with diabetes who monitor their blood glucose levels at home; participate in diabetes education; monitor their A1C levels; and get ophthalmology referrals, microalbuminuria (kidney disease) assessments, and vascular exams.

### Implications

Project DIRECT demonstrates that significant changes in the preventive care practices of health care providers can lead to overall improvements in care and can reduce the devastating complications of diabetes. Diabetes self-management education can provide special populations, such as the African American community that was reached through Project DIRECT, with some of the necessary tools to manage their diabetes more effectively.

### Contact Information

North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services  
Mailservice 1915 • Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-1915  
Phone: (919) 725-3131 • Web site: [www.ncdiabetes.org](http://www.ncdiabetes.org)